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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
13 March 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL



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Office of Current Intelligence
13 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

Communist Political Developments

1. Peiping continues to reject any suggestion of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam in an official government statement on 12 March.
2. The statement, which is toughly worded but breaks no new ground and raises no new threat, echoes earlier Vietnamese Communist protests against the landing of US Marines at Da Nang. It asserts the landing strikes "at the very heart of the Geneva agreements," and is "a declaration of the bankruptcy" of US special warfare strategy. Claiming the Marines had been dispatched because Da Nang is not safe, the statement taunts that "no forest or road in the whole of southern Vietnam is safe," and infers that the US has therefore "embarked on the path of a war of the Korean type, willy-nilly."
3. The statement also asserts the US action has further blocked the way to a political settlement of the Vietnam question and reiterates Peiping's categorical demand for complete withdrawal from Vietnam as "the channel, and the only channel for a political settlement."
4. Claiming that recent US press articles indicated the US had now decided to bomb China, the statement retorts that "the Chinese people are not afraid of such stuff" and are prepared.

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6. An editorial in the North Vietnamese official daily Nhan Dan on 13 March strikes a defiant stance in the face of alleged US plans to increase military pressure on the North and expand the use of US forces in the South. The publication claims the US now plans strikes on targets "lying deep in DRV territory," a broader involvement of US troops in combat, and a sea blockade of the North by the Seventh Fleet. Nhan Dan treats the alleged decisions as a continuation of US attempts to extricate itself from an impossible situation by increasingly desperate actions and asserts Hanoi's determination to continue the war in "both zones" and "deal the US aggressors still heavier blows."

7. Hanoi has announced the capture of 1st Lieutenant Hayden Lockhart, whose plane was shot down near the DMZ on 2 March. Two pictures, one of Lockhart and one of his plane were also published on 13 March. NCNA reports he was tracked down "shortly after he bailed out," but no firm details are given in either account.

8. Both Hanoi and Peiping have protested an alleged US air strike near the Laotian border on 11 March. The protests, which have been sent to the ICC according to press accounts, claim the US aircraft strafed a village and were driven off by its defenders. Details given indicate the protest is over the successful bombing of Mu Gia Pass on the Laotian border.

9. The Soviets sent an official note yesterday to the Chinese claiming that Peiping has deliberately distorted the facts surrounding the 4 March demonstration against the US Embassy in order to mount a "clamorous propaganda campaign." Moscow asserted that the actions of Chinese citizens during the demonstration would never have been permitted in their own country. The note categorically rejected the Chinese protest of

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alleged Soviet brutality during the incident, calling the protest "a maze of concoctions." The note asserted that the USSR "is taking practical measures" to render aid to the DRV. It went on to deliver an implied rebuke to the Chinese by contrasting such "resolute practical steps to curb aggression" with provocative actions and outrage with respect to a foreign embassy and Soviet officials entrusted with the task of maintaining public order.

10. The note sarcastically pointed out that "in all the years of the CPR's existence," China did not permit demonstrations in Peiping against the missions of imperialist states which would result in their being gutted or damaged. The note chided Peiping for such actions which "can only give joy" to those forces hoping for a split between China and the USSR. Maintaining a calm, "principled" position, as it has done for the past months, the USSR asserted that it has always strived to develop and improve Soviet-Chinese relations and would itself never embark on such a path.

Political Developments in South Vietnam

11. The Quat government yesterday outlined a program of "total struggle" against the Communists, whose defeat was termed necessary before the Vietnamese people's long-frustrated desire for peace can be realized. The official policy statement also promised a campaign against "subversive moves aiming at a peace conference designed to neutralize Vietnam."

12. Goals contained in the statement included reforms in the management of the armed forces, development of fortified hamlets, and improvement of paramilitary forces. Most of the actions promised in the statement had been attempted by previous regimes; whether the Quat regime can be any more effective in carrying them out remains to be seen.

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14. The Vietnamese Air Force went on the alert yesterday at Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut air bases in reaction to rumors of a possible coup attempt and Catholic demonstrations in Saigon. There have been no unusual troop movements within South Vietnam and the alert was apparently confined to the Air Force which continued to fly combat missions against the Viet Cong.

Viet Cong Military Activity

15. There has been no significant change in the level and pattern of Viet Cong activity during the past 24 hours. According to press reports, US Marines guarding Da Nang air base fired upon a small band of Viet Cong guerrillas on the night of 12 March. No details of this incident are yet available.

Communist Military Developments

16. There have been no Chinese, North Vietnamese, or Soviet military developments during the past 24 hours which can be directly associated with the situation in South Vietnam.

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